

rejoice in the Christmas promise of peace to men of good will. We also reflect on the mystery of Christmas, the story of the Almighty, who entered history in the most vulnerable form possible, hidden in the weakness of a newborn child. And we reflect on the call of our Creator, who by taking this form, reminds us of our duty to protect and care for the weak and the vulnerable among us.

During this Christmas season, millions of Americans will answer this call by reaching out a compassionate hand to help brothers and sisters in need. We are thankful for these good souls who show the good heart of our Nation. We're also thankful for the thousands of Americans who answer the call by serving our Nation in uniform. Many will spend this Christmas stationed in distant and dangerous lands, far from homes and from the families they love. They are never far from our thoughts, and they're always in our prayers. America honors their sacrifice and that of their families, who also serve our Nation. We're grateful for all they do to ensure that we live in the freedom our Creator intended for every man, woman, and child on the face of this Earth.

And now, as an expression of our hope for peace in this Christmas season, we're going to light the National Christmas Tree. And we have asked two young Americans to join us. Brianna Kinder helps others through her participation in the Montgomery County Police Activities League's Kids Care Club. And Damarcus Hawkins gives his time as part of the Discovery Creek Children's Museum service learning program.

And now if Brianna and Damarcus will join Laura, and if you will join me in a countdown—five, four, three, two, one.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. on the Ellipse at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne, who introduced the President; Vin Cipolla, president and chief executive officer, National Park Foundation; and Rev. Roger P. Freeman, senior pastor, First Baptist Church, Clarksville, TN.

## **Proclamation 8210—Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, 2007**

*December 6, 2007*

*By the President of the United States of America*

### **A Proclamation**

Americans value deeply our ability to speak, assemble, and worship freely. As a Nation, we can help freedom-loving people everywhere build a world in which these rights are honored and respected. During Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, we celebrate the freedoms guaranteed to all Americans and protected in our Constitution's Bill of Rights.

Many of these fundamental freedoms are still denied to people in countries around the world. The United States continues to stand with those who work to build democracy and secure the blessings of liberty. Individuals are struggling to create free societies in Cuba, Belarus, and Syria. And the day will come when they, and the citizens of other lands such as North Korea, Iran, Zimbabwe, and Sudan, will no longer be restricted from practicing their faith, voicing their opinions, and enjoying the many blessings of freedom.

Freedom and dignity are God's gifts, and during Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, we look forward with confidence to the eventual triumph of human rights for all mankind.

**Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush,** President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim December 10, 2007, as Human Rights Day; December 15, 2007, as Bill of Rights Day; and the week beginning December 10, 2007, as Human Rights Week. I call upon the people of the United States to mark these observances with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this sixth day of December, in the year of our Lord two thousand seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

**George W. Bush**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:53 a.m., December 11, 2007]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 12.

**Executive Order 13453—Closing of Executive Departments and Agencies of the Federal Government on Monday, December 24, 2007**

*December 6, 2007*

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered as follows:

**Section 1.** All executive branch departments and agencies of the Federal Government shall be closed and their employees excused from duty on Monday, December 24, 2007, the day before Christmas Day, except as provided in section 2 below.

**Sec. 2.** The heads of executive branch departments and agencies may determine that certain offices and installations of their organizations, or parts thereof, must remain open and that certain employees must report for duty on December 24, 2007, for reasons of national security or defense or other public need.

**Sec. 3.** Monday, December 24, 2007, shall be considered as falling within the scope of Executive Order 11582 of February 11, 1971, and of 5 U.S.C. 5546 and 6103(b) and other similar statutes insofar as they relate to the pay and leave of employees of the United States.

**George W. Bush**

The White House,  
December 6, 2007.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:52 a.m., December 7, 2007]

NOTE: This Executive order will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 11.

**Remarks Following a Meeting With First Minister Ian Paisley and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness of Northern Ireland**

*December 7, 2007*

**President Bush.** One of the great experiences for me during my Presidency is to witness historic occasions, and I'm witnessing such an occasion with the arrival of Reverend Paisley and Mr. Martin McGuinness here to the White House. These two men are—have dedicated themselves to embettering their—Northern Ireland through their courage and conviction and desire to put aside the past and focus on a hopeful future.

And so I want to welcome you all here. I congratulate you for seizing the moment and writing a hopeful chapter. I'm looking forward to hearing about how the United States can help Northern Ireland move forward. I know one way we can help, and that is to encourage our business leaders to take a good look at the economic opportunities that Northern Ireland presents.

And so I welcome you here. I'm proud of your accomplishments. And I welcome you all to say a few comments to the TV, if you care to do so.

**First Minister Paisley.** Well, Mr. President, our first words on that—[*inaudible*]. We want to say from the people of Northern Ireland, "Thank you." Thank you to the American people for all they have done for us in the past. We did a lot for you in the past too.

But what I can say is we deeply appreciate that. And we also deeply appreciate the fact that we're here today, and that you have met us and have tried to encourage us on this. We have had our political squabbles and fights. I think we have come to the end of that. I think that peace has come; there will be a fight for peace. You don't win peace; you have to fight to keep it. And we intend to that, and we're dedicated to that.

But we do need help in the economic field. And we're glad that the door has opened. We have had a very good reception in your country so far, and of course—[*inaudible*]. And when we look back and see this mighty army that's following hard in your tracks, we know that this is your final. And we say, thank